

# Herald Sun EDITORIAL

## Busting the cartels

**T**HE Federal Government's move to get tough with cartels is welcome.

Genuine competition is at the heart of any free market system — a fact recognised by the United States which has long had tough anti-cartel laws.

When people conspire to rig the market, consumers are defrauded.

Outlining the new regime, the chairman of the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission, Graeme Samuel, was blunt: "The message the Government is now giving to cartel conspirators is you now run the real prospect of going to jail."

The new penalties will for the first time mean that business leaders who conspire to cheat consumers will face criminal charges. The penalty is up to five years' jail.

This recognises the reality that a big company making a fortune out of a cartel regards fines as merely an operating cost.

Now the monetary retribution faced by companies will also be realistic: they will face fines of up to \$10 million or three times the value of the benefit to the cartels or 10 per cent of their annual turnover.

In recognition of the importance of exposing the cartels, anyone who comes forward to uncover cartel conduct will get protection.

Treasurer Peter Costello said: "International experience suggests immunity for whistleblowers is critical in uncovering cartels."

And when they are exposed, the ACCC will now have real clout to deal with them.

## Roads take toll

**T**HE Mitcham-Frankston tollway continues to be an albatross around the neck of the Bracks Government.

At the next election it will have to defend having broken its promise not to toll the road.

Now the Opposition has revealed that to help pay for the tollway, the Government has used millions of dollars of taxpayers' money earmarked for road improvements across the state.

What makes this government action breathtaking hypocrisy is that Treasurer John Brumby, Opposition leader in 1998, described as outrageous the Kennett government's use of the same fund to meet CityLink costs.

No amount of double-talk by Transport Minister Peter Batchelor will make Mitcham freeway fade as a damaging issue.

## Off the rails

**I**F there were a prize for the silliest transport idea, reducing the number of city tram stops must win hands down.

To cut three minutes off the trip down Collins St from Spring St to Spencer St, Yarra Trams plans to close four tram stops.

Not surprisingly the Public Transport Users Association condemns the move as a huge inconvenience to passengers.

Remaining true to the Town Hall's tradition of supporting wacky ideas, Lord Mayor Cr John So applauds the idea.

But travelling around the CBD is not about minutes saved. It involves the convenience of getting on and off trams block by block as the need arises.

But then, the travelling public are too often left behind by those who run the system.

# Please, say yes again

**L**AST week, it was announced that a revamp of organ donor laws will mean that those who have already registered to become potential organ donors will need to give their permission all over again.

Annoying, maybe, and there's a real risk that not all those who have been registered will bother to re-submit their details.

But this is not a bureaucratic blip. The new legislation will remove a grey area in existing laws and stop grieving families overriding donors' wishes.

It is expected to lead to an increase in organ transplants. And that is exactly what Australians said they wanted.

A Newspoll last year found 73 per cent of Australians believed the decision to donate organs should be legally binding, and the law should be changed so that a person's next of kin couldn't overrule the decision.

The health ministers agreed, and last week voted to implement that change.

From July, the Organ Donor Register will be one of consent rather than intention.

Importantly, this means doctors will no longer need consent from families to take organs from a person who has already registered to be a donor.

However, Federal Health Minister Tony Abbott has promised family sensitivities will not be trampled on.

"If families maintain sincerely held objections, even in the face of a deceased person's legally recorded consent, organ donation will not proceed," he said.

That sounds like another case of two steps forward, one step back; but it is progress.



**Robyn Riley**

Figures show that when a family is unaware the deceased was a potential donor, organ donation does not proceed in 50 per cent of cases.

Hopefully this will change under the new legislation, because we are talking about the steadfast wishes of the deceased. Surely that, not the concerns of the family, should be paramount?

For this reason I hope that, along with the change in legislation, there is a change in the education process of donor registration, to ensure donors inform their families so they are not surprised by the news at the very moment when they are least likely to be able to cope with such information.

**D**OCTORS, nurses and counsellors will tell you that the last thing a distraught family wants to talk about, the last thing they can make a decision about when a loved one is dying, is whether their organs may be used to save the life of another.

Many give a knee-jerk "no" because it is too raw and, understandably, too hard a decision to make under such circumstances.

David Hookes's widow, Robyn, said that what gave her the courage to agree for him to become an organ donor was that she knew how he felt.



**Ace:** Alicia Molik, a registered organ donor, has been telling teenagers to consider registering when they are 18.

"We just said, 'Of course,'" she said at the time. "As a family it was just something that we discussed. We didn't ever want to think about it, we didn't ever want to go there, but it happened."

Now a passionate advocate, Mrs Hookes helped to establish the David Hookes Foundation to raise awareness.

She continues to urge Australians to discuss the issue of organ donation and to let family members know how they feel about it.

The foundation has helped to increase awareness and registrations of potential donors, a legacy Hookes would rightly be proud of.

However, we cannot afford to let these new changes to the law damage the donor organ movement.

Re-registering is a small inconvenience when you consider the good that it can achieve.

If you need reminding what organ transplants can do, there was a timely story last Sunday of three Victorian sisters who made medical history after they all received kidney transplants.

Andrea Revell, 56, received the gift of life from her husband Philip, 48, who gave her one of his kidneys. She had been on a transplant waiting list for many years, and needed difficult dialysis treatment to keep her alive while waiting.

Her sisters, Carolyn Bastin, 64, and Maureen Ivory, 52, shared a donor and had their transplants on the same day several years ago. The sisters needed kidney transplants be-

cause they were born with polycystic kidney disease, which causes cysts to grow in the kidneys and eventually causes renal failure.

They are now among more than 30,000 Australians who have received organ or tissue transplants in the past 30 years.

While that statistic is fantastic, more than 1800 people remain on waiting lists and one person dies every five days without ever getting the organ they needed.

We also have to face the reality that Australia has one of the lowest organ donor rates in the world.

Interestingly, though, most Australians are in favour of organ donation.

The Newspoll found nine in ten adults were in favour, including 71 per cent who were strongly in favour.

**F**OR some reason, we are just not good at discussing it or following up by going through with the registration process.

It is time that changed. So let's stay positive now.

We could throw our hands in the air and complain that Australia's five million registered potential organ donors will have to sign up again because of the new laws, but we have to remember it's a good thing.

It will mean more people, ultimately, will get a second chance at life.

We owe it to them and we owe it to ourselves to follow our beliefs through and make a difference.

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## Why losing makes us winners

**A**USTRALIA Day has come and gone, and so now the New Year truly begins.

And a new year brings new resolutions. Here is mine: to become more Australian by saying "enough!"

Let me explain. I adopted Australia as home long ago.

American citizenship was given to me at birth, but I had to earn my Aussie passport. So Australia Day is special to me.

Imagine my surprise when, on the evening news, I heard so-called experts saying Australia was losing its unique national character and becoming more American.

Nonsense. Australia is no more in danger of turning into America than I am of turning into Dame Edna.

It won't happen because it can't happen.

America is a land of hype, where things are larger than life. Australia is a land of understatement and balanced perspectives.

Aussies have a natural in-built resistance to excess. It's our heritage. It's one of our most endearing traits.

Relax, we won't be turning into Yanks anytime soon. But I am disturbed by one horrible

## Duff Watkins

American trend developing here: obesity.

If obesity were an Olympic sport, the US grabs gold, England snags silver, and Australia seizes bronze.

That makes us the third portliest people on the planet. Worse, we are gaining fast.

As in any Olympic sport, it starts with the youth.

It's been reported that Australian kids have overtaken UK and US kids for the dubious distinction of being the fattest tykes on earth.

Personally, I doubt it. Having just returned from several weeks in the US, I can assure you their youth will not surrender the heavyweight title without a sumo-style tussle.

Even so, the problem of our rising obesity has heavy economic implications.

Dig these facts: airlines raise ticket prices because heavyset passengers overload the planes so much that the planes now require extra fuel.

Seats in buses, planes and sports stadiums are being widened to fit the increased girth of

the average patron. Scariest of all, there is a dramatic increase in adult onset diabetes (type 2) in the US and Australia.

Each month, our national health system strains under the added weight of these new long-term patients.

All this stems from increased obesity.

How did this happen? Australians have always known when to say "enough" — that's why it took McDonald's seven years to make a profit here.

Uncle Sam we handle easily, but Ronald McDonald simply ground us down.

Starbucks, Krispy Kreme and other US food companies, have come to Australia and do OK, but not great.

It's not the food that Australians resist; it's the fast food lifestyle.

That's how Aussies differ from Yanks. They're the ones who find it absolutely necessary to ingest sugar-loaded beverages from double-jumbo-king-size cups while driving. We don't.

They're the ones who combine driving and eating, and who love the fast-food lifestyle. We don't.

That's the difference: Australians dine, Americans eat. And they eat lots and they eat

frequently. In fact, they seldom stop, because they've forgotten how to say "enough". Sadly, the concept of enough is lost in the US.

"Moderation in all things," advised Aristotle. And it seems Australia has always taken those words to heart. Now, we need to take them to waist.

True confession: I once wolfed down nine Krispy Kreme doughnuts while driving across the Sydney Harbour Bridge.

**O**NLY changing gears prevented me from eating the dozen. Hey, nobody's perfect. Everybody has lapses. But a lapse is a temporary departure from normal behaviour.

That's the point. Dietary lapses don't lead to obesity; chronic indulgence does.

A burst of immoderate eating won't make you fat; habitual overeating will.

Our moderate lifestyle is part of our greatness.

It's part of our heritage. Let's make it part of our future.

Want to thrive in '05? Just remember to say "enough".

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Dr DUFF WATKINS has sworn off doughnuts for 2005

### STOP THE CARNAGE

ROAD TOLL

HEROIN TOLL

35

4

Victorian deaths in 2005. Heroin toll includes suspected victims.  
Source: Coroner's Court and Institute of Forensic Medicine